

Report of the Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE)

Geneva, 14-15 June 2001



**DEPARTMENT OF VACCINES
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Contents

<i>Abbreviations</i>	v
<i>Executive summary</i>	vii
1. Opening remarks	1
1.1 Dr Yasuhiro Suzuki, Executive Director of the Health Technology and Pharmaceuticals cluster.....	1
1.2 Dr Bjørn Melgaard, Director, Department of Vaccines and Biologicals.....	1
1.3 Sir Gustav Nossal, Chair of SAGE.....	2
2. Innovation	4
2.1 An overview of the priority project.....	4
2.2 Decision-making tools and information for the introduction of new and underused vaccines	6
2.3 Second-generation rotavirus vaccines	9
2.4 Pneumococcal conjugate vaccines.....	10
2.5 Case study on new vaccine supply and financing: combination vaccines	12
2.6 Accelerated vaccine introduction – global and regional activities	15
2.7 Elimination of epidemic meningitis in sub-Saharan Africa: the meningitis vaccine project.....	17
2.8 The WHO Initiative for Vaccine Research and its interaction with other vaccine R&D initiatives.....	21
3. Immunization systems	24
3.1 Strengthening immunization services	24
3.2 Coverage.....	26
3.3 Steering Committee on Immunization Safety	28
3.4 BCG vaccine – the next 10 years	30
3.5 Thiomersal	32
3.6 BSE/TSEs and vaccines	34
4. Accelerated disease control	37
4.1 Polio eradication	37
4.2 Measles: almost a million preventable deaths a year.....	43
4.3 Elimination of maternal and neonatal tetanus.....	46
4.4 Vitamin A supplementation and immunization activities	48

5. Plenary session	51
5.1 Presentations by subgroups	51
5.2 Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization	51
5.3 GAVI and accelerated disease control initiatives	54
5.4 Vaccine selection: implication of two tracks	57
5.5 Yellow fever	61
5.6 Report of the Global Advisory Committee on Vaccine Safety	64
Annex 1: List of participants	67

Abbreviations

AD	auto-disable (syringe)
ADC	accelerated disease control
AFP	acute flaccid paralysis
AFRO	WHO Regional Office for Africa
AVI	accelerated vaccine introduction (priority project)
BCG	bacillus Calmette-Guérin (vaccine)
BSE	bovine spongiform encephalopathy
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (USA)
CJD	Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DTP	diphtheria–tetanus–pertussis (vaccine)
ECBS	Expert Committee on Biological Standardization (WHO)
EMRO	WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean
EPI	Expanded Programme on Immunization
GACVS	Global Advisory Committee on Vaccine Safety
GAVI	Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization
HBV	hepatitis B virus
HepB	hepatitis B (vaccine)
Hib	<i>Haemophilus influenzae</i> type B
ICC	interagency coordinating committee
ICG	International Coordinating Group
IEC	information, education and communication (materials)
IMCI	integrated management of childhood illnesses
IPV	inactivated polio vaccine
IUATLD	International Union against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease
IVR	Initiative for Vaccine Research
MMF	macrophagic myofascitis
MNT	maternal and neonatal tetanus
MVP	Meningitis Vaccine Programme

NID	national immunization day
NRA	national regulatory authority
NT	neonatal tetanus
OPV	oral polio vaccine
PAHO	Pan American Health Organization
PATH	Program for Appropriate Technology in Health
SAGE	Strategic Advisory Group of Experts
TCG	Global Technical Consultative Group for Poliomyelitis Eradication
TSE	transmissible spongiform encephalopathy
TT	tetanus toxoid
UNF	United Nations Foundation
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNGASS	Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
V&B	Department of Vaccines and Biologicals (WHO)
VVM	vaccine vial monitor
WHA	World Health Assembly

Executive summary

Introduction

The Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE), established by the Director-General of WHO in 1999 to provide guidance on vaccines and biologicals, held its third annual meeting on 14 and 15 June 2001 in Geneva, Switzerland.

Progress was reviewed in relation to various objectives and targets set by the Department of Vaccines and Biologicals (V&B). In his opening address, Dr Yasuhiro Suzuki, Executive Director of WHO's Health Technology and Pharmaceuticals cluster, pointed out that guidance from SAGE would be critical as WHO began reviewing and revising the strategic plan covering vaccines, immunization and biologicals for 2002–2005. The Director of V&B, Dr Bjørn Melgaard, outlined the dramatic changes that had transformed the global immunization scene in the preceding year and the issues that SAGE would address. Important among these were:

- how the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI) would come to terms with a possible new mandate as an alliance for the whole global immunization agenda;
- how to close the polio funding gap;
- how to align the objectives of GAVI with polio eradication and other disease control objectives;
- how to strive towards equity in immunization by achieving access and high coverage throughout the world;
- how the infusion of huge additional resources was leading to the introduction of new tools and technologies and creating a need for more partnership in vaccine research. Professor Sir Gustav Nossal, SAGE Chair, referred to the hope and dynamism that GAVI had created and to the roles of WHO, SAGE, GAVI and the Vaccine Fund.¹ He remarked that whereas GAVI was financed for five years, WHO would exist until the world was healthy enough not to need it. Furthermore, whereas the Vaccine Fund was narrowly focused, GAVI had to have a broad vision. Sir Gustav considered that the objectives of GAVI and V&B should be identical.

¹ Formerly the Global Fund for Children's Vaccines.

The deliberations

On the first day there were three parallel sessions, covering innovation, the strengthening of immunization systems, and accelerated disease control. WHO's work, including projects conducted with UNICEF and other partners, was presented and questions were put to SAGE. For each topic of discussion a list of endorsements and recommendations was agreed by a subgroup. On the second day, summaries of the previous day's deliberations were presented to a plenary session and recommendations based on them were adopted. Additional matters, including GAVI, were discussed, and recommendations concerning them were also made. A summary of the main topics of discussion is given below, followed by the recommendations.

Main topics of discussion

Innovation

The considerable achievements of V&B in the area of innovation were noted. These included internal advocacy in many countries for the introduction of new vaccines. Some of the issues discussed are listed below. Fuller summaries are given in Section 2.

- **Disease burden activities:** the feasibility of estimating the *Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib) pneumonia burden in Asia using vaccine intervention trials.
- **Vaccine introduction:** the collection of information in order to develop a position on infantile hepatitis B (HepB) immunization for presentation to SAGE.
- **Combination vaccines:** a paper presented to SAGE on demand and supply issues was an excellent example of WHO's role in making critical information available to countries and decision-makers on the introduction of new vaccines.
- **Initiative for Vaccine Research (IVR):** a discussion of IVR's role in integrating WHO's vaccine development activities.
- **Meningococcal A/C vaccine:** exploring public-private partnerships, as reflected in the V&B initiative relating to the meningococcal vaccine project for Africa.
- **Pneumococcal conjugate vaccines:** the importance of additional efficacy studies in developing countries to determine the impact of vaccine on pneumonia and mortality.

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